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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

For Thursday, November 30, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "INSECTS THAT THRIVE IN HEATED HOUSES." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. Publications available, Leaflets 144-L, 145-L, 146-L, 150-L, 152-L, 189-L. (149-L temporarily exhausted, reprint ordered.)

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Times have changed for some members of the insect world as well as for human beings. When houses were less evenly heated than they are today, many of the insects that like household surroundings went into a long winter sleep. Spring was the season for the housewife to be on the lookout for troublesome visitors.

But our well-warmed modern dwellings are as comfortable for insects as for people. Instead of hibernating for the cold months, many kinds of insects continue to live and multiply actively all winter. So even in cold weather we housewives find ourselves using insect powders, sprays and other remedies to get rid of these unwelcome boarders.

Fortunately the scientists of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in the U. S. Department of Agriculture have prepared a series of short free leaflets on the various household insect pests and their habits, and just now I'm told there's a good supply of all these leaflets except the one on silverfish, and there will soon be reprints of that one.

Clothes moths are a good example of the change that has come about. Formerly our chief concern was with the winter clothes we stored away over the summer. We had to make sure they were brushed and clean, and carefully packed with moth balls or flakes of naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene. But now, moths fly about and lay eggs at any time of the year in our heated houses. It's true that woolen coats, suits, and dresses in constant use will be fairly safe from moth damage. But we can't wear all our garments all the time, and there will be some garments hanging

in the closet which will attract moths.

Why not institute what one woman's college calls "closet sweeps day"? That means that once a month everything must be taken out of each student's closet so the cleaning staff can do a thorough job. At the same time, with clothes spread out in the room, closet-sweeps-day affords a good chance to look the articles over, discard useless garments, and put forgotten ones into circulation. Others are mended, brushed, or sent to the cleaner. All this thins out the number stored in the closet and shuffles them around so that almost any moth looking for a nice smug dark place for egg laying will get discouraged. That's only one maneuver against moths. If you want more points on moth prevention, write to the Department of Agriculture and ask for Leaflet 145-L.

Next on the list is the carpet beetle. The young of the carpet beetle also attack woolen clothing and shun light. They like to get under the edges of rugs and carpets, into upholstered furniture, behind baseboards and mantels, or in floor cracks. They're usually out of reach of even the most vigorous housecleaning.

If you discover a heavy infestation of carpet beetles, you may have to call in a professional fumigator. Otherwise the precautions that apply to moths will control carpet beetles, and vice versa. The leaflet which throws light on carpet beetles is 150-L.

The silverfish prefers starch and sugar to woolens and furs. This soft, shiny little insect, about three-eighths of an inch long, has been greatly on the increase in the last 10 years because of improved household heating. Silverfish will eat thin fabrics of cotton and rayon to get the starch in the sizing. They damage books and bookbindings, wall papers, starched clothing and lace curtains, and anything else containing starch. As the silverfish leaflet is temporarily out of print, I'll give you the formula for a poison bait which you can scatter wherever you find these pests. Are you ready to jot down the ingredients?

Mix together, dry, one and three-fourths cups of oatmeal, one-fourth teaspoon white arsenic, one-half teaspoon sugar, and one-fourth teaspoon salt. Then moisten and mix again thoroughly. Dry this bait to prevent mold, and grind it into small bits to scatter easily. Put about a teaspoonful of the bait in each of several shallow cardboard boxes, such as necktie boxes, and cover each box loosely with a crumpled sheet of paper. Put the baited boxes about, where the silverfish run. Remember that arsenic is a poison. Store your supply, and also this bait, well out of reach of children and pets.

Don't confuse psocids (pronounced so-sids) with silverfish. Psocids are tiny little creatures about the size of a pinhead. Sometimes they cluster in great numbers on furniture, walls, or clothing. They are harmless, and neither bite human beings nor destroy furnishings, but they are sometimes blamed for damage caused by silverfish or cockroaches. You can get rid of psocids by dusting with pyrethrum powder. Leaflet 189-L has further information about psocids.

We talked about cockroaches quite recently, so I'll just remind you of the leaflet, No. 144-L. Food crumbs left carelessly about will attract roaches, and clean housekeeping will starve them out. Dusting their runways with sodium fluoride or pyrethrum powder is recommended. The first is poisonous.

If you have a dog or cat, you may have trouble with fleas, either on the animal or in some part of the house, particularly the basement. Leaflet 152-L discusses several kinds of fleas and what to do about them.

I mustn't forget to mention the leaflet about the unmentionable bedbug. At least, it used to be considered a disgrace to find one, but this attitude has changed. Bedbugs get in on our clothing or on packages, and it's a good plan to keep a copy of leaflet 146-L on hand for such emergencies.

I believe now I've checked over the most troublesome of the insects that thrive in winter in our heated houses,- moths, carpet beetles, silverfish, psocids, cockroaches, fleas, and bedbugs. Summertime brings others, but sufficient unto the day are the insects thereof!

